

STACK
ANNEX

5

061

545

Privately Printed
157-



Robert Washington Gates

Call to West

Given by
Ruth Ann Sath

1937

THE QUEST OF JOY



Mabel Morrison
aged 21
1868

THE QUEST OF JOY

*Fragments from the Manuscripts
of*

MABEL MORRISON

*Prefaced by
'Mabel Morrison: A Character'*

by
EDITH OLIVIER



PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

Typography by Faber and Faber Limited
24 Russell Square London W.C.1

Printed in Great Britain

by R. MacLehose and Company Limited
The University Press
Anniesland Glasgow

To
DOROTHY

Who longed to see this book
but
who rejoined her mother
before it was completed

2066905



CONTENTS

MABEL MORRISON: A CHARACTER	13
THE QUEST OF JOY	57
CHAPTER THE FIRST	59
FRAGMENTS	67
ELINOR DYING	88
A LETTER	90
LITANY OF PRAISE	92

ILLUSTRATIONS

Mabel Morrison, aged 21 (1868)	<i>frontispiece</i>
Newstead Abbey, Notts	<i>facing page 16</i>
Fonthill House (The Pavilion) <i>From a print after J. Rutter</i>	18
Wilton Church from Rectory Terrace <i>After a drawing by Alfred Olivier</i>	23
Mabel Morrison, 1868	27
Mabel Morrison with her elder son, Hugh, 1868	29
Mabel Morrison with her daughter Katharine (about 1872)	31
Fonthill House with Mr James Morrison's alterations	35
Fonthill House, showing the galleries added by Mr Alfred Morrison	36
Mabel Morrison, about 1870	38
Mabel Morrison, 1909 <i>From a drawing on vellum by Gere</i>	42
Mabel Morrison, about 1912 <i>From a pastel by Mathilde de Cordoba</i>	44
Handwriting of Mabel Morrison	47
Mabel Morrison, aged 85	52
The Picture on the Title Page is the Entrance Lodge to Fonthill House, ascribed to Inigo Jones <i>From a woodcut by W. Hughes after a drawing by T. Higham</i>	

MABEL MORRISON

A Character



MABEL MORRISON

A Character

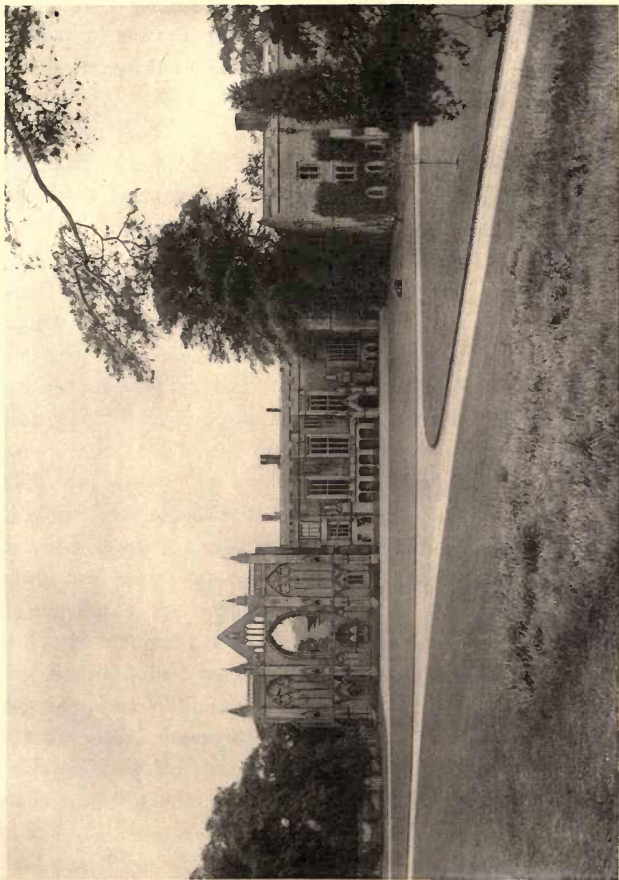
At some time in the first decade of the nineteenth century, a young Army doctor named Robert Chermside was quartered at Blackrock near Dublin, when, on his return home from duty one morning, he had an adventure destined to make considerable changes in the course of his life. He was in the act of letting himself into his house, when he heard, coming down the road, the sounds of a runaway horse. In a few moments it had careered madly past him. At the next curve in the road it threw its rider, who lay motionless on the ground, while the noise of the clattering hoofs went on and on, till it was lost in the distance. The doctor ran to the spot where the unconscious stranger lay, and carried him into his own quarters, where he would undoubtedly have died but for the exceptional skill of his rescuer. As it was, he remained in the house for many weeks, recovering slowly.

The injured man was Colonel Wildman of the 10th Hussars, who would, a few years later, purchase Newstead Abbey, notorious then as only lately the home of

Lord Byron, and as the scene of many scandalous orgies both real and imaginary. This chance meeting, which can indeed be called 'accidental', was the opening of the long connexion of the Chermside family with the home of Byron. Colonel Wildman did not leave young Chermside many more months at Blackrock. He quickly arranged his appointment as doctor to his own regiment, to serve with it both in the Peninsular War and at Waterloo. The two men were lifelong friends.

Years later, when the colonel was an old man, living at Newstead, there rode over one day to visit him the little granddaughter of Robert Chermside. She was staying near by, at Papplewick, with Mrs. Walter, her mother's sister; and now Colonel Wildman and his wife fell again under the Chermside charm. They soon invited the little girl to pay them what turned out to be the first of a succession of long visits, and there Mabel used to sit, evening after evening, listening to the colonel's stories of the Napoleonic Wars, in Lord Byron's fantastic refectory hall, the walls of which were now hung with a magnificent set of Gobelin tapestries, brought back by the colonel from the war in Spain. He had been fortunate enough to catch a soldier in the very act of looting these treasures, and with great acumen he had checked this unauthorised act by buying the tapestries from the man who had got possession of them.

More than sixty years later, that little girl had long been Mabel Morrison, and she was often again at Newstead, for her brother Herbert's wife, Miss Geraldine Webb, inherited the place from her father. So it happened that



Newstead Abbey, Notts.

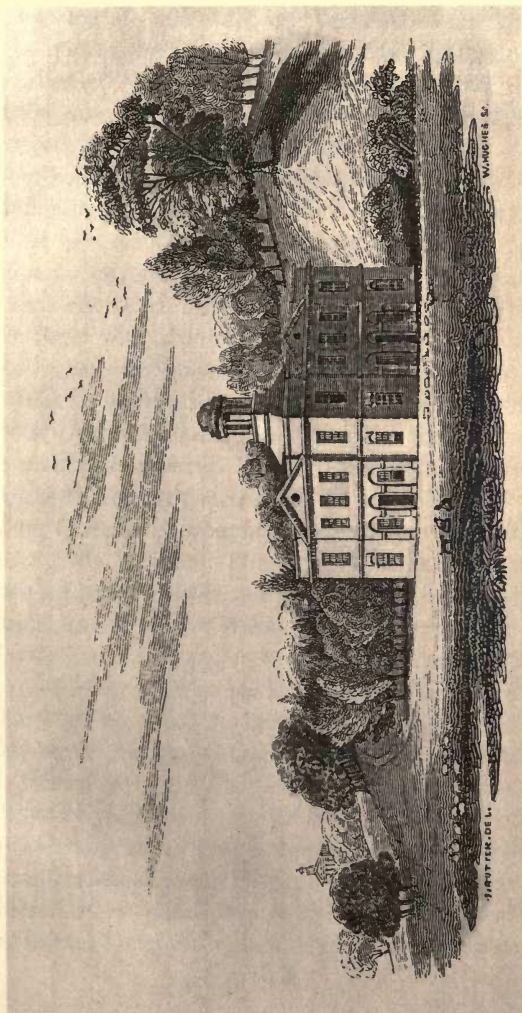
the life of Mabel Morrison, first and last, was associated with the home of the most bizarre of English poets; while in the intermediate years her own home was to be at Fonthill, made famous by William Beckford, a character as eccentric as Byron himself, for she married Alfred Morrison in 1866.

Architecture at Fonthill is catastrophic, and houses there live adventurous lives. The Fonthill House bought by Alfred Morrison's father in 1837 was not the first house on the site. Colt Hoare speaks of three as having existed before the end of the eighteenth century. He calls the first, 'Fonthill *antiquus*' and only says of it that it was 'consumed by fire' at an unknown date. Then came 'Fonthill *redivivus*' bought by Alderman Beckford, and also burnt down, in 1755. In this fire perished the alderman's celebrated water organ, which cost £5000, and which was worked by power from the reservoir on the hill which also supplied the fire pumps. And now, while the water streamed vainly on to the tremendous roaring flames, and while the roof timbers crashed through the burning floors, the organ was heard for the last time to pour forth a torrent of music. Beckford at once built another house, called by Hoare 'Fonthill *splendens*'. It cost £240,000, but William Beckford disliked its site, and in 1807 he pulled down all but its laundry wing, a block separated from the main house by a covered colonnade, and it was this comparatively small house, then called the Pavilion, which was bought by Mr. James Morrison.

His son Alfred was then a boy of about sixteen, and at Fonthill they heard Beckford spoken of as quite recently

a country neighbour, and as still living at Bath. He had not yet become a tradition. The classical church built by his father was still standing at Fonthill Gifford, and there were old people living who could tell in what spot in the park had been buried the crusaders' coffins which he had removed from the old church. In the family pew were the cushions worked by Beckford's daughter the Duchess of Hamilton, and the rector was the same old clergyman who had shown the church to Lord Nelson on his famous visit to Fonthill in 1800. The workpeople spoke bitterly of Beckford, of his capricious ways and his violent temper. He had treated them like the slaves in his Jamaican plantations, breaking into such a fury when the work on his new waterfall was not carried out to his liking, that he turned to, and gave the unsatisfactory workmen a sound thrashing with his own hands.

William Beckford lived on at Bath till 1844, and about the year 1843, Alfred Morrison walked up one afternoon to the terrace to look at the abbey, a ruin since its great tower fell in upon it in 1825. Another visitor was there before him. An old gentleman, mounted on a sturdy little cob, had halted some way off, and he was gazing at the wood and at the ruins in so absorbed a fashion that he never observed the young man who had come upon him. It was William Beckford. He had ridden over from Bath to look for the last time on all that remained of the most stupendous of all the follies which he and his contemporaries had set upon a hundred hill-tops. The old man and the young one looked at it in silence, and then each returned to his own place.



Fonthill House, then called the Pavilion
As it looked when Mr. James Morrison bought
it in 1837

Lord Byron and William Beckford were kindred spirits, and of the same family was Mabel Morrison. It was ordained that the circumstances of her life should lead her from Newstead to Fonthill and then again to Newstead. These places were naturally her homes.

The Dr. Chermside who found Colonel Wildman when he had fallen on to his head in the road at Blackrock, and who set him on his feet again, became later on a very famous doctor. He remained with the 10th Hussars till the wars ended with the Battle of Waterloo, and he entered Paris with the allies; but on the declaration of peace he returned to science, the real interest of his life. He went to Edinburgh to study there in the medical schools. Queen Adelaide made him her doctor, and the king sent him to attend Mrs. Fitzherbert in her last illness. Lord Yarmouth, afterwards the Lord Hertford of the Wallace Collection, brought him to Paris to attend on his mother Lady Hertford. There he settled as doctor to the British Embassy. He became Sir Robert Chermside, and he and his wife (a Miss Williams of Herringstone in Dorset) were given a small house adjoining Lord Hertford's own, and this was his home till the end of his life. His son Richard Seymour was the father of Mabel Morrison.

One more chance meeting remains to be recorded. To Paris, about the year 1840, came Alfred Morrison, and the boy of eighteen was reluctantly dragged to an official party given at the embassy in honour of Sir Sidney Smith of Acre. He knew no one, and no one knew him, and he wandered away alone through the long suite of rooms, till at its end he found himself in what he at first took to

be an empty room. He was mistaken, for a minute later he saw that the room was already occupied by an elderly gentleman, sitting alone, and evidently as bored by the party as he himself had been. As was to be the case when he saw Beckford at Fonthill, Alfred Morrison said nothing to the stranger, but he was struck by his appearance, and long afterwards he spoke of the piercing eyes and the vivid personality of that small old man wearing the ribbon of the Legion d'Honneur. It was his first contact with a member of the Chermside family. Seven years later, that old man would have a granddaughter destined to be Alfred Morrison's wife.

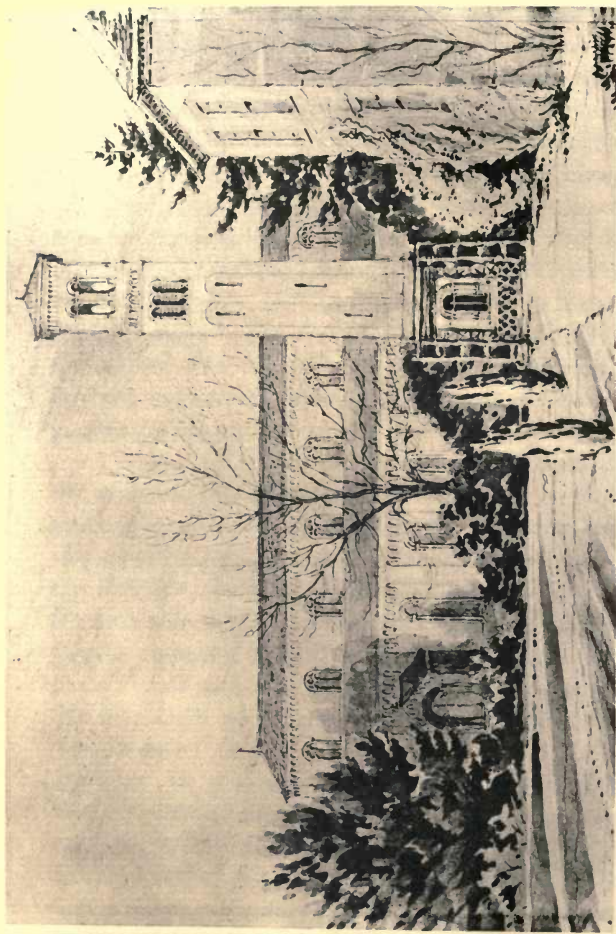
The Chermsides' son was educated so entirely in Paris that when he went to Oxford before taking orders in the Church of England, he could neither understand nor speak the Latin that he now heard. He used the French pronunciation. After his ordination he went to work in Leeds, where Dr. Hook's parish was then one of the great training schools for the Anglican clergy. The clergy of the Church of England then occupied a somewhat different position, and were trained otherwise than they are today. Most families of standing in English counties had a younger son in orders, and these young men had all, as a matter of course, taken degrees at Oxford or Cambridge. Those universities were still ecclesiastical establishments, and theological training colleges would have been superfluous, so most men were ordained deacons on the strength of their university studies, and they then served an apprenticeship as unpaid curates in great

places like Leeds or Great Yarmouth. Here the young men lived what was almost a community life, and a very enjoyable one; but they also found themselves immediately called upon to act as leaders in the spiritual, educational and philanthropical life of the place. Organised religion then occupied a different position from that which it holds today. The pulpit was a leading influence in the thought of a country where practically everyone went to Church on Sunday morning, and went home to discuss the sermon over the Sunday joint. There was no national system of elementary education. The clergy taught in the church schools, and they gave evening lectures to the grown-up members of their flocks, who came eagerly to the spelling bees and travel lectures which were looked upon as lively entertainments in those pre-cinema days. The clergy were the chief friends of the poor and suffering, going among their flocks (as Mr. Chermside did subsequently at Wilton) during outbreaks of cholera or other illness, and tending the sick and dying when there were no trained nurses either for rich or poor.

Mr. Chermside married while he was at Leeds, and there was born, in May 1847, his eldest child Mabel. Her native place was not destined to affect her after-life, as the Chermsides left Leeds almost immediately for Wilton, where Mr. Chermside had been appointed rector. Mabel's home was to be in Wiltshire for the greater part of her life, but throughout her childhood, Wilton was little more than a background for the Europe which spread itself before her eyes. Her earliest memories were

those of playing on the ciré parquet floor in her grandparents' house in the Rue Taitbout and her first words were spoken there and in French. After Lady Cherm-side's death, Mabel lived in Paris with Sir Robert for about two years; and when he went, as he often did, to Boulogne, the little girl travelled there with him, and stayed in the farmhouse belonging to the parents of Mélanie her *bonne*. Here she ran fearlessly in and out of the cowsheds, making friends with the cattle; and here too she first learnt how to run fearlessly into the confidence of simple country people. To the end of her life she maintained this natural easy commerce with farm labourers, and keepers, and hand workers of all kinds. Outwardly she became a very great lady, with always something exotic in her way of entering a drawing room, in the dramatic movements of her hands, and in the slow sidelong turn of her head when she talked or listened with a look of remote amusement half-hidden in her eyelids. All this was very mannered, and a homely British farmer's wife might be expected to find her very alien. On the contrary, it was completely easy for her to become friends with country men and women, though she first learnt the way to do this, not in Wiltshire, but in Normandy.

Wilton too was by no means the typical English country place of the eighteen-fifties. Wilton House was occupied by Sidney Herbert, afterwards Lord Herbert of Lea, and with his Russian mother (the daughter of Count Simon Woronzow, the Russian Ambassador in London) he had lately built the great Romanesque Church which



Wilton Church from Rectory Terrace about 1867
From a drawing by Alfred Olivier

dominated the Chermsides' rectory garden. This building, so curiously unexpected among the downs and water meadows of southern Wiltshire, was another of the exotic things to which Mabel Chermside grew up, and for her its campanile stood as naturally among the poplars, as did the spire of Salisbury seen springing from the rounded contours of the plain.

Throughout her girlhood, Mabel travelled far more than most of her contemporaries. Mr. Chermside was *poitrinaire*, which meant for the family several winter visits to the Riviera, though it was a very different Riviera from the one of today. No 'Palace Hotels' had intruded their arrogant heads between the high villages and castles of Provence, and the bright Mediterranean coast. No broad tarmac road vibrated under the engines of high-powered cars racing from casino to casino. Cream-coloured oxen drew loads of produce along farm roads; and in the eighteenth century villas by the sea, there lived old Italian countesses who taught Mabel to collect oddly shaped lemons, and to arrange them in elaborate silver dishes. The country had been little changed since the days of the Romans, and when Mabel visited it in later life, she was horrified to find that America had made of it a new place during her own lifetime.

Her tenth year was spent in Pomerania, where she lived with a family called von Torno. Two memories remained from that. She remembered the huge spring washings of the German women, when they spread their mountains of linen upon the river banks; and there was

one unforgettable winter night, when they sat listening to the distant howling of wolves. A sound like nothing else.

Surprisingly enough, Mabel was a terrific tomboy, rollicking about on the downs and in the meadows with her two brothers Walter and Herbert, tumbling headlong from a coracle into the Nadder, the stream which bounds the rectory garden, and climbing the trees for miles round. After she had been dressed for a party, Mabel raced out one afternoon to have one last look at a nest in a very high tree; but when her concerned mother pursued her, too late to prevent the escapade, she found the muslin dress neatly folded up at the foot of the tree, and she looked up to see Mabel at its top in her petticoat.

All her life, she loved and studied birds and animals. Her brothers and she once painted the cocks and hens a brilliant magenta, thinking that they must be bored with their dull plumage. And as a child, Mabel was followed everywhere by the pet fawn given to her by the keeper, while she carried on her wrist a tame owl, called 'Fuchsia Buds' because of the funny popping sound which it made. There were wonderful rides on the downs with Mary and Maud Herbert, her chief girl friends; and together they watched Mr. Gladstone cutting down trees in the park, and collected chips as keepsakes. Lord Herbert was a wonderful *raconteur*, and all the children enjoyed his endless stories; and it was through him that they all loved and admired his friend Florence Nightingale.

At sixteen, Mabel was a singular and beautiful figure to come upon in a country rectory. All her life she had her own peculiar style of dressing, and already she enjoyed

collecting amusing costumes in the various countries she visited. She brought back strange headdresses, shawls and jewels, to add their foreign flavour to her own lavish movements, to the beauty of her face, and to the brilliancy of her speech. The Chermsides were not rich, but Mabel had always her own splendour.

Thus it was not only her temperament, but the circumstances of her upbringing, which made Mabel Morrison, to the end of her life, something like a bird of paradise in the Wiltshire scene: she was different from the wives of the neighbouring country squires.

That childhood of hers is very long ago; yet now and again there reaches us from it a record of some almost forgotten episode illustrating a characteristic which stayed with her to the end—courage, generosity, or the sense of responsibility. It reads almost too like a story from a *Collection of Moral Tales for Nursery Readers*, when one learns that the beloved doctor of the parish of Wilton was in those days named Dr. Good; yet such I believe was the case. To him came one day the little Mabel Chermside, asking him to pull out a tooth, 'and it must be a double one,' she said.

Dr. Good looked into the little girl's mouth, and could see nothing wrong, so he asked her where the pain was.

'There's no pain. I only want it taken out.'

The doctor eventually discovered the truth. One of Mabel's uncles used to give the children a reward for bravery when a tooth was taken out—5/- for a single tooth, 10/- for a double one. And Mabel had overheard her parents saying that they really could not afford the

port wine which the doctor continually ordered Mr. Chermside to drink. Mabel had immediately rushed off to the doctor, to find the means of taking her part in meeting the family problem. Perhaps this was the very tooth commemorated in a book found at her death in the Littleden library, and inscribed, 'With love from your friend Elizabeth Herbert—the price of a double tooth.'

A few years later there comes a story which, alarming as it sounds, puts the child Mabel into a setting nearer to the fantastic world of her later life. Wilton Church is built over a large crypt, part of which was originally planned as a burial place for the Herbert family. Directly the church was finished, some coffins from the family vault in the old churchyard were removed to this new place; and about sixteen years later when Lord Herbert himself died, his coffin was placed, with the rest, in an open recess at the far end of the crypt. For many months Lady Herbert made it a practice to spend some part of each day praying beside her husband's body; and, in order to make this possible, the crypt was unlocked at a certain hour every morning, and locked at night. Mr. Chermside always did this himself, never leaving it to old Musselwhite the parish clerk. On one occasion, when he and Mrs. Chermside were away from home for a few days, the key was given to Mabel, then aged about sixteen. She did her duty conscientiously till one evening when she and Herbert had been out fishing together, they stayed out later than the time allowed by the strict old nurse who was left in charge of the children. It was extremely exasperating to Mabel that she, the eldest



Mabel Morrison
1868

sister, should be packed off to bed in disgrace before the little ones, and she consequently forgot the crypt. She woke in the middle of the night to remember it. Her honour was at stake, and she crept out of bed and down the dark stairs into the garden. Here it was moonlight, but a moonlight broken by hurrying clouds which threw horrid moving shadows about the dark yews in the churchyard, while little puffs of wind made uncanny little sounds. Mabel ran swiftly to the crypt, shut the door at panic speed, and locked it in one instantaneous movement. When it was shut, she realised that in that momentary peep into the darkness, she had seen (or thought she had seen) a tiny light in the far corner. Was it possible that she had locked someone in among the coffins? Many years afterwards, Mabel Morrison said that all her life she had never again done so brave a thing as when she went back to that horrible door, unlocked it and called into the darkness, 'Is there anybody there?' The mere fact that no answer came increased the terror which she had scotched, not killed, and now she fled back to the rectory, and scrambled into bed with a heart which throbbed violently for an hour or more.

Mabel was only nineteen when she was married at St. James' Church, Piccadilly, to Alfred Morrison, a man twenty-five years older than herself; and with this marriage she entered upon a life really adapted to her remarkable character. Till then she had not found herself. There warred in her the tomboy, the scholar, the artist and the princely giver; and now from these incongruous elements in the child Mabel Chermshire, was to be

created the striking and unforgettable personality that was Mabel Morrison. Her husband now owned Fonthill, and he was a very rich man. He was also a man of immense taste and knowledge; and together these two now proceeded, in the place where Beckford had once surrounded himself with his famous treasures, to build up new collections of rare Oriental china and carpets, of pictures, of manuscripts, of lace, of enamels and many other beautiful objects. And, child as she then was, Mabel, no less than her husband, from the first never contemplated any object for the employment of their wealth than in such noble and lofty directions.

There were enigmatical currents in the deep channel of her spirit. What was in her mind when her brother Walter found her in her room just before her wedding, seated in her bridal robes, gravely reading the burial service? Certainly this was no commonplace bride, and yet, as certainly, this was no pose, for throughout her life, no one was ever less of a *poseuse*. This will be denied by people who only knew Mabel Morrison by seeing the magnificent sweep with which she entered a room, who watched from a distance her elaborate gestures, or who listened, without really knowing her, to her richly stored conversation. Stupid people who only knew her slightly often thought it impossible that she could be really natural when she was so unlike themselves. Yet, for those who knew her well, if there was in her one quality which never failed, it was her sincerity. When she discarded convention, as she often did, it was from no wish to make an effect; it was because her clear eyes were fixed on the



Mabel Morrison
with Hugh her elder son, 1868

thing within—life and naked truth, which alone interested her. Her grand manner was never a mannerism. It clothed a true grandeur of spirit. And the more closely one knew her, the more one realised the innate candour of her soul.

The tomboy did not die on Mabel's wedding day. It was not his funeral service which she was reading. He reared his head at least once again. The bride and bridegroom had returned from their honeymoon to Basildon, the family house on the Thames, and here Mabel was expected to play her part as the correct matron of the period. But she could not long remain in any mould fashioned for her by other people: she must make and break her own as she pleased. Now there happened to be staying in the house a niece of her husband's who was only three years younger than herself, but who, not yet being 'out', was still permitted by the etiquette of the day to enjoy now and again a little decorous romping. It tells much of the code of manners to which young people were then expected to conform, that it was never forgotten in the family that Mabel Morrison, then a married woman, was known to have thrown the train of her velvet dress over her arm, in order to jump over the flower beds with her sixteen-year-old niece. What made it worse was that the naughty girls were said to have got up at six in the morning to carry out this indelicacy, although the additional touch of the velvet train throws doubt upon this added audacity.

In the first eight years of her married life, Mabel Morrison had five children—the first of these, little

Rachel, only living for ten months. Sixty years later, that child still lived vividly in her heart, and she spoke with loving pride of the unsullied spirit for which she had provided a brief lodging, and which had returned to God, its purity unstained. She never looked upon this transient life as having been a futility; it remained for her a wonder.

Five children before she was twenty-seven, and at the same time a very full life of travel, society, slumming (as it was then called) and the immense and varied occupation of making the Fonthill collections which meant constant interviews with experts speaking every possible language—all this made too strenuous a life for any young woman, and for twelve years after the birth of her last child, Mabel Morrison made a gallant struggle with suffering. She endured very great pain from an internal illness, and was condemned to be nearly always on her back. She lay in her sitting-room opening upon Carlton House Terrace, and astonished the Londoners by keeping bees outside her window. To watch them was an unfailing amusement. Her children were constantly with her, and she read aloud to them the books of the period—*Lilian's Golden Hours*, Scott's novels, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and many French books. Memories remain of New Year's Eves at Fonthill or in London, when the children were allowed to stay up with her till the bells of Hindon Church or of Westminster Abbey told them that the New Year had come in.

Among the French stories which Mabel specially loved, and which she read to the children, was a story put into the mouth of an old French woman, who



Mabel Morrison
with her daughter Katharine
about 1872

watched a very pretty young lady whom she met at a party. This charming creature looked with longing eyes at other people dancing the fashionable Valse, but she never danced herself. The explanation was that during their honeymoon in Rome, the lady's husband had been taken desperately ill, and in her distress the bride had vowed to the Virgin that if his life were spared, he should never wear any colours but her own blue and white.

The bridegroom recovered, to find all his own clothes had been hidden away and replaced by surprising blue and white garments. He declared that he would never wear them, and he refused to get up till his own clothes were given back. The bride put the case to her director, who pronounced that she could keep her vow if instead she sacrificed something else which she deeply loved. She gave up valseing for life.

Mabel's children were not quite small when they first heard this story and then Katharine, the elder of the two little girls, understood why it was that for the first five years of her life, she too had always worn blue and white clothes. She had been *vouée au bleu et blanc* by her mother, in memory of the little sister whose place she came to fill.

During these invalid years, Mr. Morrison built a wooden house on the downs under Great Ridge Wood, commanding a wonderful view southward to the Dorset downs which sweep to the sea. Here Mabel Morrison and her children spent many summer weeks. They only took one servant with them, Mabel's personal maid, but Alfred True the woodman kept guard in the kitchen all night companioned by his dog. At 8.30 every morning a

dogcart appeared, containing a housemaid and a kitchen maid surrounded by hampers of food for the day; and at 11 o'clock a mounted groom galloped up with the post. The children's ponies arrived late in the afternoon, to be petted and fed, and then after tea to be ridden about the downs. By evening all these visitors from the outside world had vanished again: the children had gone to bed, and the everlasting silence of the downs lay round the house. Then Mabel Morrison lay in the verandah, reading some of the great pile of books which arrived for her every day wherever she was; if she was well enough, she sauntered in the wood, or she drove on the downs in the moonlight, watching the glowworms faintly shining in the grass, and the stars blazing away in the enormous circle of the sky. She refused to give in to being an invalid; and when a particularly severe bout of pain had driven her to bed for several days, she insisted upon walking a few steps in the very first hour that she felt better, and on forcing herself to walk a little further each day.

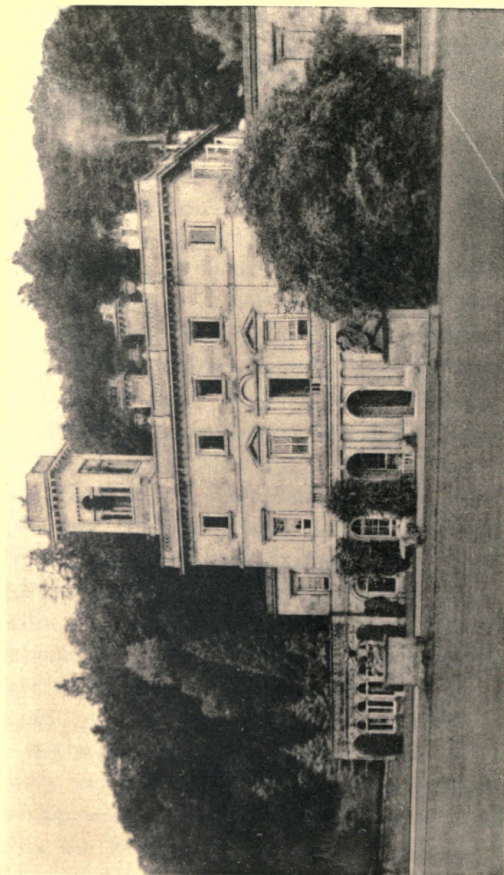
One effect of these years of ill-health was a lasting indifference to conventional hours. Mabel Morrison made it a rule to rest when she felt tired, and never to appear among her family and friends till she was able to take her part in life. So to the end she was only seen at her best, though at what strange hours! At any time in the neighbourhood of midnight, she would summon a son, a daughter, or a friend to her side. She had been invisible all day; but now she was well and felt at her most brilliant, so she sat up in bed, put on some unusual but very becoming headdress, and received! The guest often

arrived extremely sleepy, having lived a normal life during the day, and now being ready for bed; but all wish for sleep was swiftly banished under the stimulus of those exciting talks. Whatever might be expected of her, Mabel Morrison never failed in being quite unexpected, and especially so in the small hours of the morning. With audacious dash, she leapt from subject to subject. By turns she would be challenging, teasing, or entertaining. Suddenly she would turn upon her companion, with a quick direct question on some completely unforeseen subject; and then it was no use pretending to know what one didn't know, to understand what one didn't understand, or to enjoy what one didn't enjoy. Mabel Morrison had a witch's gift for reading one's inmost thoughts, and no acting was good enough to deceive her. She always found one out, and then she would bully and tease and ridicule, when all the while she was opening one's eyes to the real range of the question under discussion, and to the great distances which her own mind had travelled.

At last one reeled back to bed, physically exhausted perhaps, but with the mind whirling with new ideas, the vision widened to undreamt-of possibilities, and the wits battered by the swift spring of that elastic mind, which could always come back with a repartee. Then Mabel Morrison was left alone with the mysterious little supper which always waited under silver covers by her bedside, but which often remained untouched till morning.

By the eighties of the last century, Mabel Morrison was no longer the invalid she had been for some years,

though she did not abandon her privilege of living her own life at her own hours. Hers was one of the first English houses to introduce the French custom of breakfast in bed. It is now general here, and Mabel had been used to it in France from her childhood; but in those days it shocked the Wiltshire neighbours who looked upon it as immorally indolent. Indolence, however, was never Mabel Morrison's failing. Her life was always immensely full. At Carlton House Terrace and at Fonthill, she entertained most of the distinguished people of the day. In her circle were, among others, George Eliot, Jenny Lind, Leighton, Alma Tadema, the Hubert Parrys, Christine Nilsson, Norma Neruda, Robert Browning (a constant dinner guest), Holman Hunt, Wollner, Louisa Lady Ashburton, Lady Marion Alford, the Percy Wyndhams, Lord and Lady Wolseley, and a host more. Mabel's brother Herbert was now a man of great influence in the near East, and she enjoyed receiving his friends when they came to England, and also choosing richly engraved swords from Wilkinson's for him to present to Beys and Effendis. Rudyard Kipling and his family were country neighbours, and he named Mabel the Queen of Sheba because of the rare Oriental jewels which she liked to wear; and yet, with that happy chance which so often gave her surprising contacts with days far earlier than her own, she had, too, a link with Shelley through her friendship with Trelawney. Millais painted him as the man in his 'North-West Passage' and the girl in that picture wears the dress worn by Mabel Morrison at the marriage of Hubert Parry and Lady Maud Herbert.



Fonthill House with Mr. James Morrison's Alterations

The Morrisons made their great Fonthill collections in the spirit of the eighteenth century collectors, and indeed they could not do otherwise. They had so many links with the past. Alfred Morrison was born in the year of Napoleon's death, and as a child he learnt French from a woman whose husband had gone to school with Robespierre. Old Mrs. Morrison often told Mabel how she had heard the sailors sob at the funeral of Lord Nelson, and too how she had seen Louis XVIII drive through a violent thunderstorm into the gates of the Tuileries on the very day before his death, and he was the brother of Louis XVI. If Mabel Morrison was born too late to possess these direct links with the legendary past which lay behind the Battle of Waterloo, yet she too had played as a baby among the rare treasures collected by Lord Hertford, which were then in his house in Paris, and now form the Wallace Collection. There she could well learn with what exquisite delicacy the most murderous weapons can be decorated, and she doubtless remembered Lord Hertford's weapons when, many years later, she chose those engraved swords for Sir Herbert's Turkish friends. At Wilton, too, Mabel Chermiside had been familiar with the famous treasures collected by successive Earls of Pembroke in the days when collectors were dilettanti and not dealers.

The new Fonthill collections soon overflowed the house, then still only the service wing of Alderman Beckford's mansion. Mr. Morrison added three galleries, ugly rooms, but apt for their purpose, which was to display the collections under a top light. The windowless

walls gave the rooms a peculiar subterranean character. The marble staircase was carpeted with leopard skins, and the magnificent Oriental china was given a Crystal Palace-like room opening on to the garden. The Morrisons bought not only antiques: they considered that a rich collector should encourage contemporary art, so they welcomed to their house lacemakers, painters, enamelists and embroidresses, whose work they bought and whose designs they criticised, perhaps not always in accord with the taste of today. But can we be certain that the taste of the nineteen-thirties will for ever be recognised as infallible?

The walls of the corridor leading to Mabel Morrison's sitting-room at Fonthill were lined with books, the overflow from the room itself, and most of the volumes were bound in leather bindings designed by herself. She was always a voluminous reader, but what she wanted from a book was less its literary flavour than the matter it contained. She was first and foremost a student, and as far as possible she accepted no knowledge at second-hand. Thus, at a time when it was the fashion to decry the French character as decadent, and to say that the French people had had their day, she refused to accept this verdict on a country she had loved from babyhood. She did more than 'refuse to accept'. She studied the question for herself. For two or three years she set herself to the study of every possible aspect of French life and thought. She read the new French books on politics, philosophy, archaeology, cooking, religion, poetry, criticism, science, art, fiction, military strategy and tactics, and anything



Fonthill House
Shewing the Galleries added by Mr. Alfred Morrison

else which came to hand. Her ultimate decision was in favour of the French people, and this as the result of no preconceptions on her part. Hers was the unbiased mind of the natural scientist.

And too she had an unfailing memory. All that she read was stored away within easy reach in her brain, and she could call it up with no more difficulty than she would have taken a book from its shelf. She seemed also to have memorised all the pictures in the National Collections of France and England at least, and could describe them in detail even when she had not actually seen them for years. She had her own taste in pictures as in all else, and she was not swayed by changes of fashion in art.

At Fonthill, Mabel Morrison indulged to the full that love for animals which had been one of her chief characteristics as a child. It is regrettable that one of the few things Mr. Morrison ever refused her was her wish to keep an elephant there. It would have been completely in the picture. At one time, there were a hundred horses in the stables; and she admired fine creatures of all breeds—horses, Suffolk red polls, and Kellow the bailiff who was the strongest man in Wiltshire. Lord Methuen alone could vie with him in his feat of lifting a cow out of a ditch. There was abundance of dogs always at Fonthill—borzois, dachshunds, chows, exotic Afghan dogs and a black poodle which Mabel Morrison insisted on putting into a bath of bay rum when he returned once after passing a night or two down a rabbit hole. She carried her bul-bul to London, and used to drive with it in Hyde Park.

Mabel's independent mind was an unfailing delight to her husband, in whose eyes she remained the most unique among all the treasures he had collected. He too had his enthusiasms, one of which was an admiration for the local cheeses and cheesemakers. He used to drive a pair of cobs on the downs, with a funny little stunted groom perched up at the back of his phaeton, and he often turned in to the farms to have a talk with the farmers' wives. After one of these expeditions, he brought home four or five immense cheeses, which were placed on view on the sideboard in the tapestry room, one of the remaining Beckford sitting-rooms, its gilding still decorating the oak panels. Here Mr. Morrison often lunched, his luncheon usually being a second breakfast of coffee and other breakfast dishes, or if he had a guest, there would be priceless old claret brought to the table in its sanded green bottle. The cheeses remained untouched till the family was removing to London, when Mabel suggested taking them with them, or else giving them away. But no. They were too precious, and so they were put away in the safe, to be found there in an over rotten condition some months later.

Like his wife, Mr. Morrison was a great book-buyer, and his parcels of books, like hers, were delivered almost daily. But unlike her, he was in no hurry to open them, and they remained on the floor in their paper parcels till his wife and daughters insisted on one of their periodical unpackings. Even then, the books were not put away in shelves, as Mr. Morrison said he could see them better on the floor, so there they lay, with a path kept clear between



Mabel Morrison, about 1870

them from the door to his chair. William Morris once said in this room, 'Mr. Morrison is the only man I ever met who keeps his books on the floor and his carpets on the wall.'

At Fonthill, Mabel Morrison's amusing freaks were accepted without question by a rural population which remembered Beckford, though a suddenly improvised display of rockets one night did bring riders from ten miles away, galloping over in the belief that they had seen signals of distress. The people of Islay, who never knew a Beckford, were more pardonably startled when one September night in the early nineties, they saw great flames roaring to the sky, and apparently coming from Islay House. They crowded to the rescue, to find that a bonfire, thirty feet high, had been suddenly lighted in honour of the birthday of a twelve-year-old guest—Regy Herbert, now Lord Pembroke.

Mabel's predecessor at Fonthill would have enjoyed the joke as much as she did, when she took her guests one day to a picnic in Great Ridge Wood. Here the ladies made the coffee, while the gentlemen busied themselves in beating up omelettes with their walking sticks, when the party was disturbed by a sudden outbreak of harsh and stentorian discord. Their hostess had smuggled into the wood the Hindon Brass Band, which was hidden in the trees very close by, and now, at a signal from her, it burst forth, with its drums, its cornets, its horns and its bassoons. The effect was terrific.

Riding habits were then romantic garments, with tight-fitting bodices and long flowing skirts; and, wearing

one of these, with on her head a small chimney-pot hat, Mabel Morrison rode a great deal on the downs round Fonthill. She was entirely at home with her grooms, her gardeners, her carpenters and her sewing women, and her way with them was one of those things in her which was more like the eighteenth century than her own. She had always the presence of the great lady, and yet she could joke and laugh and talk practically of practical things with them on what seemed to be equal terms. One reason was that she always knew very well what she was talking about. It was unfailingly surprising that this seemingly eccentric lady should be one of the most skilful of housekeepers: no cook understood French cooking better than she: every detail in her house was carefully planned and thought out by its mistress. She could talk of hounds with the huntsman as if she were a kennel-man; she planned her gardens with the vision of a *le Notre* or a Capability Brown. But it was not only this practical common sense which endeared her to her work people. There was in her a gaiety and a lightness of spirit which is very rare. She threw herself ardently into life wherever she found it, sailing in the bay at Fishguard; walking on the hills at Islay so untiringly that the old woodman remarked that 'Mistress Morrison is so nimble on her feet'; making friends with cochers in the streets of Paris; and always succeeding in getting a laugh out of depressed old gentlemen selling antique books at the bookstalls across the river. She did whatever came into her head, as on one occasion when someone stared at her rather rudely in the train, she put up her parasol and sat behind it.

In the eighties and nineties, Mabel Morrison's life was full of colour and variety, surrounded, as she was, by her many friends and those of her children, now growing up. She took a great part, with Princess Christian, Lady Grosvenor and Mrs. Percy Wyndham, in inaugurating the South Kensington School of Art Needlework; and with Mrs. Lowther she began the Amateur Art Exhibition. Both of these remain to testify to the practical enthusiasm of Mabel Morrison and her friends.

The Fonthill House of Mabel Morrison's day stood among lawns and trees, with the lake before it, and some fine pieces of statuary placed here and there. At Shawford the garden was a Topiary one, with, in its centre, the circular old sunk cockpit which she was enchanted to discover there. In neither case were flowers the main feature, and yet her tenderness for flowers was almost as great as if they were human beings. She would never pick one unless she thought it would live longer in water than on the plant; and the few cut flowers which she brought into the house were tended two or three times in the day. She loved talking of flowers, their forms, their habits and their individual characters. But in gardening, the landscape came first.

Old age was Mrs. Morrison's supreme and ultimate achievement. Most old ladies are deemed to have fulfilled their vocation if they succeed in growing old gracefully. This means that they must find contentment in receding into the background, and becoming with the years an ever fainter shadow of what they were in their prime. They should allow the present to drift remotely by, without

interrupting their quiet preoccupation with the past. They should welcome visitors with gentle pleasure, and should be ready, when invited, to relate their early memories, though at not too great a length. Mrs. Morrison did nothing of the sort. She grew old in her own way.

To begin with, there was her appearance. White hair held no terrors for her. She met it with outstretched hands; and for the last twenty-five years of her life she dressed like a French lady of the time of Louis XVI, recapturing for herself the beauty and the character of the heaped-up white wig of that period. Her hair was dressed in the fashion of a Gainsborough picture, surmounted often by a great mob cap, while round her head and chin was wound a scarf of lace or of pale pink tulle. This was fastened at the side of the throat, and usually secured by a somewhat enigmatic brooch—a note of interrogation formed of large diamonds. Visitors to Fonthill, to Shawford, or to Littleden often came upon their hostess walking in the garden thus attired, and carrying in her hand one of the many odd walking sticks which it amused her to collect. But she did not lean upon her stick in the manner expected from old ladies. No. She held it well away with the free gesture of a drum major wielding his staff; and as she walked in the garden she was often so absorbed in her thoughts that she seemed neither to hear nor to see the approaching guest. Her figure was always erect, but her head was sometimes bent, looking at the ground, or at some flower beside her, and she smiled to herself as if at a secret thought.

She at once swept the new arrival into the swift stream



Mabel Morrison
From a drawing on Vellum by Gere 1909

of the ideas that were in her mind, very often by means of those startling questions which had always given her so much pleasure. In putting these questions she sought one of two alternatives. In the first place, she was immensely interested in other people's ideas, and sincerely anxious to learn what they were. She respected the individual point of view, even, and perhaps most of all, in the case of a very unsophisticated person or a child. Failing this, she sought for amusement, in the case of persons possessed of no ideas of their own, but thinking it necessary to improvise an imitation. She delighted in watching the wriggling of someone trying to say what he or she thought was expected. For such insincerity, Mrs. Morrison had no mercy, although as a spectacle it gave her great pleasure; and she greatly enjoyed laying snares for its possessor. It must be admitted that there was a great deal of the tease in this generous, kind-hearted woman; and in the case of anyone she saw to be an intellectual sham, she could be quite pulverising; while the unhappy person gibbered more and more hopelessly beneath the malicious smile in those bent-down eyes.

After her husband's death, Mrs. Morrison lived for a time at Shawford near Winchester, where she added a wing to the beautiful late seventeenth century manor house, and was captivated by the rare silver tone of some unstained oak panels which she found there. There was very little of this wood left, and she had more very skilfully pickled to match it, thus anticipating, by her personal fancy, a later and much overworked fashion. But then she had always loved the different woods, respecting in

each its individual quality. At Shawford, too, she forestalled the modern vogue for unstained deal, admiring it as the eighteenth century people admired it when they first saw it, for its reddish colour, and for the harsh strength in its veining, which makes it seem a younger and a more virile wood than the dignified oak.

These bold experiments were typical of Mrs. Morrison. She was ever unaware of passing changes of fashion in taste, were they concerned with dress, with decoration, with art, or with architecture. She chose for herself, with fire, flame and intuition; but her initiative was rooted in the hard foundation of her clear intellect, and controlled by her wide knowledge. She belonged to the Baroque family—a family who were no parvenus of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as some suppose, but who have made their sudden appearances in many different ages. They hail from Babylon, from Imperial Rome, from Constantinople, from Moorish Spain, from Medician Florence, and from the England of Queen Elizabeth. Everywhere they combine a fundamental sense of form, with the love of exotic decoration and a taste for the far-fetched. Mrs. Morrison was born with this exciting blood pulsating through her veins, and the course of her life was inevitable.

She liked fine stones, and she usually wore some magnificent pearls, white and black; but she also loved the rich warm colours of the semi-precious stones, and to the end she sometimes wore the exotic jewels which Rudyard Kipling had admired on her long before. She did not only wear these jewels on her person. She liked to see



Mabel Morrison
From a painting by Mathilde de Cordoba 1912

them herself, so uncut and unmounted stones always lay about on the tables in her room, while imperfect pieces of stained glass charmed her by their unintended colouring. Lumps of coloured glass stood about in places chosen carefully by her where they could best catch and refract the light.

Sitting with her among her rare Chinese furniture, with fantastic gleams lurking in corners where lay the flawed lumps of amber, sphene and other curious stones, her 'slyness of tongue' (as it has well been called) threw equally unexpected lights on to any subject discussed. She seemed to have forgotten nothing she had ever read in the multitudinous books which lined the walls of every house she inhabited, and there were always new and out-of-the-way subjects which at one time or another she appeared to have studied profoundly. Then there would suddenly come from her an impish remark on nothing in particular, such as 'I sometimes think it must be the most amazing experience in the world, to wake up on the morning after being made Pope, and to say, *I AM INFALLIBLE*'.

In spite of her fundamental sincerity, Mrs. Morrison had no commonplace objection to drawing the long bow in conversation, and she could embroider a situation with such a sense of its real import, that the decorations with which she clothed it made it more truly itself than it would have been if left in the nude. The fact that some lions once escaped from a travelling circus into the Forest of Fontainebleau contains in itself nothing memorable. It is merely an isolated fact. But when it appears that Mrs. Morrison was walking alone in that

forest at the time, moving with the deliberate grace of some tapestried figure come to life, and holding in her hand a long ebony cane with a carved ivory head—when, staring at her from among the underwood a few feet away, she saw the gigantic head of a lion, his huge mane set against the surrounding foliage, and his tawny eyes meeting her own—then the Fontainebleau lions come to life. The more so when one learns that she looked about her and now saw the long slinking forms of several other lions coming up all around. With complete self-possession, she threw herself upon the ground and feigned death, and the fierce creatures came up to her, sniffed at her and then made off.

Sometimes after one of her best stories of this kind she would give her hearer a challenging glance, as if to defy contradiction: but who could wish to contradict?

Mrs. Morrison made a thing true by the power of her will. She said one evening to a guest at Shawford, 'Tomorrow I mean to have a quiet morning. I shall not come down till teatime. Will you amuse yourself?'

The guest accordingly sat sewing in the garden hall, when, quite early in the day, Mrs. Morrison appeared, hastening to and fro, and followed by a man from Christie's. She was carrying a small cabinet, and the man had another and larger piece of furniture. She almost ran in her ardour to carry her burden from one room to another, and on her way she passed so near to the sewing friend that she brushed her knee. Yet she did not appear to see her. The friend took the cue, and ignored the presence of her hostess. Normally it would have been

W. York
Hartford

THESE
AND SEVEN
HARTFORD

12/27

Shawford Place,
Shawford,
Hants.

THESE
AND SEVEN
HARTFORD

Dec 26th

My darlingest Kate
The warmest thanks
for the dear little
brooch. I like its
old-fashioned, it makes
one think of Miss
Augustine's brooch —
I like wearing it —

Handwriting of Mabel Morrison

good manners to offer to help in carrying the various things which were being carried about; but it was clear that as Mrs. Morrison had said she meant to be in bed that morning—in bed she was. So she passed, again and again, invisibly, while her friend invisibly sewed. At tea-time she appeared as she had promised, and simply remarked that she had had a restful morning, and that she hoped her guest had been happily occupied.

In nothing did Mrs. Morrison show the true generosity of her nature more than in the giving and receiving of presents. Most noticeably in receiving, for the beautiful and gracious way in which she showed pleasure in any little thing given to her by a friend was indeed a more delicate movement of generosity than the making of a gift herself. It was hard to think of things to give her, for she seemed to have everything, and also she had the means to buy for herself whatever she wanted; yet the difficulty that one felt was just the measure of the difference between one's own generosity and hers. She always appreciated the affection which prompted the giving of a present to herself, but that was not all. She was really delighted to open the parcel, for in spite of all her beautiful possessions, to the end of her life she never became blasée. The thing which she disentangled from its wrappings was at once in her eyes something fresh, surprising, interesting, ingenious or beautiful.

The presents she gave were unique. A motor-car drove round Wiltshire a day or two before Christmas, leaving, not one parcel, but several, at the house of each of her friends. Accompanying them was a *Catalogue Raisonné* of

the presents, for each thing had its own special feature, either in its appropriateness to the receiver, or in some historical or artistic interest of its own. These lists added immensely to the fun of unpacking the presents, for everything was described in most spirited style. The only occasion when I ever heard of any difficulty in reading Mrs. Morrison's most original and extremely clear handwriting, was when she seemed to describe a beautiful Malacca walking stick with a carved ivory top, as a 'Rabbitting Stick'. It couldn't have been that, but the stick remains a rabbitting stick to the present day.

Mrs. Morrison was completely indifferent as to the cost of the presents she gave, although she was well aware of the market value of things. No one could judge better than she the probable price of a jewel, a piece of lace, a bit of furniture, an engraving or a first edition. But when she gave a present, considerations of price did not concern her, one way or the other. She gave what she thought her friend wanted. And with no sparing of trouble to herself. With great care and the expenditure of considerable time, she would personally choose the model, and arrange the fittings for a dress which would best bring out the points in a young girl whom she had invited to a party in her house, or for the wife of a composer whose opera was being produced in Brussels. She took infinite pains, when giving a fur coat to a poor lady who had never before possessed one, that it should not only be warm, but becoming. For an impecunious student living in the country, the present was a subscription to the London Library. But these presents were rich as

well as appropriate, and it was the second of these characteristics which Mrs. Morrison really thought essential. At the door of a friend who had lately acquired a large empty house on the Berkshire downs there appeared one morning two pantehnicons filled with very valuable and beautiful eighteenth century furniture. They came—like that—quite unexpectedly, without any parade or fuss. It meant that the new house, and any other house to be lived in by that friend in the future, must be for ever beautified by these rare things. And then the next morning came another present—this time a parcel by post. It was eagerly unpacked, and there appeared several pairs of what looked like vest sleeves without the vests. They had been considerably darned and mended, but were still able to keep the arms warm. Mrs. Morrison had been thinking again of that house on the downs, with the winds blowing round it. On winter nights she herself often wore, under her lace sleeves, a pair of these long woven mittens; and without waiting an hour she had gone to her room, and from her drawer had taken all she could find to send off in that parcel. In her eyes this present was every bit as important as the priceless furniture of the day before.

Mrs. Morrison did not exact or expect from the young the ideas or the standards of her own youth. What she appreciated in them was just that difference from her own youthful memories which to many old people is so annoying. She enjoyed drawing out her grandchildren and her other young friends, to learn from them what were, in their own eyes, the opinions and aims, the

achievements and the failures of the new generation. 'Grand-Maye' they called her, as her own children had called her 'Maye'—the name given to her by her little girl Katharine, and which lived on, as children's early attempts at speech so often do. So Mrs. Morrison remained to the end 'Maye' to more than one generation. It was characteristic of her that she could and did carry friendship over from one generation to another, and that as the old friends died, their children and grandchildren grew up to claim what had fallen from their elders' hands. And it was easy to succeed to this inherited friendship, for Mrs. Morrison was that rare linguist—the one who understands and speaks a new version of her own native tongue.

The long and varied life, bringing the inevitable succession of losses of so many she had loved, did not wear down Mrs. Morrison's unfailing resiliency. She was indeed one of those who gives fresh life to the hackneyed phrase, 'Age did not wither her nor custom stale her infinite variety'. And too, if she was ever tired, she would not lay that burden upon her friends. She adhered to her practice of only seeing them when she was at her best: otherwise she remained hidden in her own rooms. So to the last she met her visitors with the virile manner and quick grasp of things which had always distinguished her. Yet she must sometimes have longed for the end. In her youth she had been very impatient and she knew it; and during the last years she sometimes said to her daughter, 'I must wait and wait here till I have learnt the lesson of patience. Then I shall go.'

But she betrayed none of the weary quiescence which might sound in those words. She still dominated her dinner table by her racy and sparkling conversation. She still talked with the same large gestures and free movements, ignoring such trifles as wine-glasses and tumblers if they stood in her way. She would send half a dozen glasses crashing to the ground with a magnificent sweep of the hand, and appear absolutely unconscious of what she had done. The flow of her conversation continued unaffected by the din of breaking glasses; while Elliot, the perfect butler (whose dignity and distinction made Mrs. Morrison declare him to be a member of the St. Germain's family) removed the wreckage, collecting the glasses in fragments from the floor, as naturally as he would have carried them whole from the table.

In religion, as in all else, Mrs. Morrison's attitude was individual. Throughout her life it occupied her deepest thoughts, but she was never dependent upon the rites of any church. She remained a member of the Church of England, in which her father had been a priest, and though she studied the teaching of the Church of Rome at the time when Lady Herbert of Lea and her daughter Lady Mary followed Newman and Manning into that communion, yet she could never have been at home there. Her whole personality had a colouring which gave her a strong outward affinity with the Latin races, yet her mind and intellect worked on lines which were distinctly English. Post-Reformation English too. Mrs. Morrison sometimes looked back to the undivided Western Church of the Middle Ages, and said that in a previous existence

she had been a Catholic. But since the Reformation, both the Roman Church and the English mind have grown, and they have grown farther apart. The elasticity of the Catholic Church has hardened at Rome into new dogmas; and the English people now think instinctively in terms of science. The ceremonies of the Church of Rome might have caught Mrs. Morrison's imagination: its tenets would have imprisoned her mind.

The thought of God possessed her, and she had the constant sense of His presence. Perhaps she found Him most nearly in human relationships; for she sometimes said that she disliked Thomas à Kempis because he taught that the disciple of Christ must be free from all bonds of personal affection. For her, human love was in each generation the incarnation afresh of Christ upon earth; and she certainly did give to such love always a touch of eternity. She never forgot, nor can she be forgotten.

When she was more than eighty years old, Mrs. Morrison pencilled down upon a card six suggested titles for the book she then resolved to write. They were

Joy, the soul's desire.
Our attainment of Joy.
The Path to Joy.
Renunciation—Joy's Prelude.
Our desire for Joy.
The Quest of Joy.

To begin at that age was characteristic of her, and of her courageous attitude in face of old age. Characteristic



Mabel Morrison
aged 85
1932

too was the idea of her book, indicating no loosening grip upon life, no world-weariness. Joy was her subject.

The book was to contain her ultimate philosophy of life—the sum of all she had learnt from experience, from reading, from thought and from prayer: and during the last years of her life it occupied her almost entirely. But she began too late. Time was against her. The strong masculine brain worked less easily. It became a battle with time, and in that battle she was beaten. The book was never finished, and the final and compelling occupation of those months bequeathed only a great sheaf of fragments. They have, in a way, a peculiar interest just because they *are* unfinished, for they show more of the working of the writer's mind.

What remain are two desks crammed with scraps of paper, postcards, exercise books and note books, all completely covered with Mrs. Morrison's remarkable and unfailingly clear handwriting. Almost all are written in pencil, and as one goes through them one discovers that there is much less material than at first appears. Every passage, every phrase, and almost every word, has been weighed, considered, re-written, altered and corrected, with the most fastidious patience. And even in their final form, these unconnected passages do not represent the Mrs. Morrison who was known to her friends. They do not sound like her authentic and very individual utterances. In talk she had an audacity of phrase which gave to her conversation a very modern ring; while here are Victorian cadences, recalling the sixties and seventies when Mrs. Morrison's literary taste was being formed.

This is probably why she was never satisfied with what she wrote. It explains the constant and unfinished revision. She could not succeed in forcing the new wine into the old bottles.

So it would not be possible to make a finished book from these bundles of notes without putting them into a new form, and one which Mrs. Morrison would neither have recognised nor accepted; and yet one cannot consign these manuscripts, which meant so much to her, to the waste paper basket. All that can be done is to present some of her fragments in their present fragmentary condition. They will at least be the actual words she wrote, and they show what she was thinking of in those last years.

Mrs. Morrison meant to present her philosophy in the form of letters and conversations between a group of imaginary people, and she lived with these people while she was writing the book. She discussed them constantly with her intimate friends, and in her talks they took a far more concrete form than appears in the manuscripts.

Here is her 'List of Personages.'

Elinor Fortescue.

Adrian Willoughby, to whom she had been engaged, killed in battle.

Alan Graham, Elinor's uncle, lately become a widower.

Marion Graham (deceased), his wife.

Naomi, their little daughter.

Thirza Somerville, a kinswoman of Marion's, and Elinor's godmother.

Bernard Graham, Alan's brother.

Elizabeth Fortescue, née Graham (deceased), Elinor's mother and Alan's sister.

Mr. Harcourt, a near neighbour of Alan's.

Kenneth Murray, a little boy, Mr. Harcourt's ward, and on friendly terms with Naomi.

A series of letters were to open the book, and to disclose the situation at its outset. Elinor and her uncle are each plunged in profound unhappiness, and the plan was to show how they both found the way back to joy, helped, mainly, by the wise advice of Thirza Somerville, and by the amusing wisdom of the child Naomi.

These letters are printed here in the text which it seems probable that Mrs. Morrison preferred, and they are followed by a succession of passages and aphorisms which appear to have gone through the polishing process. At the end come two items which most likely were not to have been in the book at all, but which fall well into place—a 'Litany of Praise' and a letter from Mrs. Morrison about old age.

Everyone who heard of the book while it was being written will have known Naomi, Mrs. Morrison's favourite character in it. She loved children, understood them well and easily made friends with them; and the creation and the delineation of this child's character was a great interest to her. She saw Naomi as very funny and individual, and with a shrewd wisdom which was to be a constant stimulus to her elders. She was, in fact, to be the key character of the book; and yet now hers is the least finished of all. What there is of her is not at all like the delightful child whom Mrs. Morrison talked of; and

though the book without Naomi is like the play without Hamlet, it is fairer to leave her out.

These fragments are in any case inadequate. They do not give a true picture of their writer, but she never meant them to be that. They are only some part of what she wrote as her testament to her friends, for if she had finished this book she meant it to be only for them. She wished to pass on what seemed to her to be the most precious thing which her long life had taught her—that sorrow is personal, and passes; while joy is universal, and remains.

THE QUEST OF JOY

*Fragments from the Manuscripts
of Mabel Morrison*



CHAPTER THE FIRST

Joy in the Haven where they would be

Thirza Somerville to Elinor Fortescue

Elinor darling.
Tidings of a great calamity have reached me, with news of the overwhelming blow that has crushed you. Adrian, the gifted, lovable man who was to have made you his wife, has been killed in battle, slain in the hour of victory. All words of mine will be powerless to bring you comfort in the poignancy of your sorrow. But, child of my heart, in solitude let your tears flow unchecked, give vent to your grief on your knees, pouring it out to God in all its intensity, all its depth which He alone can fathom. You and Adrian were perfect lovers—in high ideals, in love of God and your neighbours, and in joyous outlook on life—you were as one. Flawless was the gift of love each gave the other. Alas! No marriage will follow. Desolate and solitary will you remain, for Death has intervened. In truth my darling you are sorely stricken, bereft on the threshold of life of the lover you supremely loved. Far be it from me to din you with counsels of resignation. Proffering them is but the application of irritants to a quivering sore, but rebellion of

spirit, Elinor, indisputably magnifies every trouble. All we who love you and hear the wail of your heart, pray with fervour that in your grief God will draw you into the Haven of Consolation that lies ever open to His children, for safe within that anchorage, solace will reach and bless you.

Elinor Fortescue to Thirza Somerville

My loved and precious Godmother.

In life shared with Adrian, I deemed my service to Christ would be rendered, but for my woe, my heavy heavy woe, it is ordained that I should serve in severance from him. Since early childhood, courage, high-mettled, ever kindled my admiration: now in sore extremity I pray that from God's inexhaustible well, a constant stream of courage may flow to replenish me, else I perish. In my prayers at night, confession of cowardice assails me, a cowardice that obstructs my service and impairs my trust. In all humility I implore that God's sustaining strength may enter my inmost soul. Godmother, who has watched over me always in the place of the mother I only vaguely recall, pray, O pray I beseech you that I out of weakness may be made strong; and I entreat that my cry, 'Lord I believe, Help Thou mine unbelief!' may ascend together with your prayers for me.

Elinor Fortescue to Thirza Somerville

My Precious.

I write again. Please listen. The spring of life within me is broken. I am obsessed in its stead with a

longing for death. Death will re-unite me with my Beloved, while the future on this earth, bereft of him, appals me, so overpowering will be my loneliness. That my desire for death will be accounted sin is to me simply inconceivable. It may have been God's intention, by plucking Adrian from me, to graft in my soul a welcome to death. Filled with this thought, with bowed head I can voice the words, 'Thy Will be done in earth as it is in Heaven'. During my twenty years of life I have known much happiness, but God's supreme gift to me was the love and homage of the man to whom marriage would have joined me. He has passed on. I dare not murmur, but my heart faints and sighs for union with Adrian, and I entreat God of His mercy to end my life here.

Thirza Somerville to Elinor Fortescue

My Child. My Child.

Would that I might share the weight of anguish that is yours, but the removal of human sorrow pertains to God alone. To none of His creatures can He delegate this power. Your first letter filled me with deep thankfulness. With joy I recognised your insistent appeal for courage. I felt that only God-inspired courage could save you from shipwreck of the soul, but Christ will fill you, Elinor, with fortitude to live. Ceaseless appeals for help rise to our Lord, from the throbbing throngs distraught by danger, or stricken by loss, who entreat His support. This dense multitude of distressful ones meets with no rebuff, for the ineffable command has gone forth that all should boldly approach the Throne of Grace, where help

may be claimed commensurate with every need. Kneel, Elinor, with outstretched hands in supplication to that Throne from whence descends the strength of comfort assuaging the bitterness of every grief. Your second letter, with its tone of deep depression, caused me no surprise. The first reception of a surpassing sorrow frequently acts as a stimulant and stirs the soul; while this is followed in most cases by a reaction so violent that the soul is then plunged in utter and hopeless despair. Elinor, shake yourself free from despair. The courage we are praying Christ to send you, will not tarry, and its advent will grant you strength. To be willing at God's call to lay down your life, is truly a preparation for death, but to clamour for death in the ache of sorrow is repining, disguised though it be. Give thanks that he you loved so wholeheartedly was spared a lingering death, was exempted from a maimed and crippled life, and in lieu was summoned above for promotion in the service of Christ. Time is but a condition of earth; take comfort therefore in the thought that you alone experience the pangs of separation. Think not, dear darling, that my words imply any pride in my own power of bearing grief. Deeply do I realise how my past trials weighed me to the ground, so that only God's infinite mercy could aid me to re-adjust my life. I write to you frankly, using that liberty of speech which you have invariably conceded to

Your Godmother.

Elinor Fortescue to Thirza Somerville

Your letters disappoint me. I hoped (filled with misery as I am) to convince you that I am not rebellious, only a broken-hearted creature who entreats your supplications with God that He will take her to Himself. What should I do here? My life is closed. My parents are both dead. I leave no children to mourn me. Godmother, this is the first time you have failed me, you who have hitherto been my immoveable stand-by. Cannot you see that I have no doubts of your love? but that I plead, plead, plead for the sympathy of comprehension. For dear pity's sake, enter into the abandonment of my grief.

Beloved Godmother.

Uncle Alan was I knew waiting for my decision, while I was tossed to and fro with conflicting emotions. Formidable on the horizon loomed the question of Naomi, for, tenderly as I love Alan and Marion's little daughter, I doubted whether at this juncture my companionship would be desirable for the motherless child. My own sorrow, no longer—so I prayed—fraught with rebellion, still held me in grip. Serenity of temper on my part would be insufficient unless I could throw myself with zest into Naomi's pursuits and plans as I did in former days. Life with Uncle Alan would help me I knew. His quick perception of the best in people always drew out their best, and his sympathy was inexhaustible. Then there would be the superlative attraction of unchecked speech about Adrian, for the two men had become friends even before our engagement. I ran on in this vein

—Should I? Could I? Could I? Should I? Till with a start I clutched my throat exclaiming, ‘O, this irrepressible *I!* This *I* must be kept at bay else it will master me.’

Self pity and search for consolation had occupied my thoughts and this wearisome self-love was again uppermost. How could I alleviate my uncle’s grief, I who tenaciously imprisoned myself in sorrow? Then, with a rush came the knowledge that a path to consolation lay open. God, of His infinite goodness, was offering relief to my loneliness. My uncle wanted me. Sharing Alan’s sorrow would help me to conquer my own: shedding happiness around his child would bring brightness into his life too, while I should learn the joy to be found in the service of Christ. This call had come like an embassy from Heaven.

Tempest-tossed by grief, I looked upon the gift of Adrian’s love as withdrawn: immersed in self-pity, my view became distorted. Slowly, very slowly, a changed thought stirred within me, as I became conscious of the fallacies buoying up my grief. My inmost heart’s desire was not withdrawn. Wholly mine while Adrian lived, his death suspended its expression here, but it would surround me in our united life above. I was cherishing a tarnished love for Adrian—a love replete with selfish claims. I began to disentangle the confusion of my thoughts. Adrian, beyond the reach of pain, weariness and disappointment, was blessed by the peace of God which passeth all understanding: ought not rejoicing for him to fill my soul? I saw that while I allowed my heart to be racked with longing for my beloved, I alone was

impairing the love that had been my glory. What was the quality of the love I was offering? A love permeated with repining. The revelation was overwhelming. My own act was extinguishing the lustre of my love; and the repetition, 'My soul is weary of my life' was a complaint weary and monotonous. It was one, furthermore, which would range me with the Gloom-mongers of the world. At last I was roused. That contemptory epithet filled me with passionate protest. From the Gloom-mongers and their ranks I was determined to escape.

In the blindness of self-pity I felt God *owed* me death. A wave of jealousy was roused by your reminder that Adrian's death in its circumstances could, despite its tragedy, form a subject for thanksgiving in my prayers. To point out what I should feel about Adrian savoured of a liberty taken with what was exclusively mine. My misery rose to heights no human aid could diminish, given over, as I was, to turbulent reckless despair. My heartbeats hammered without respite, and I was racked by tumult, till a voice in full resonance of majesty and sweetness spoke with authority and sweetness:

'My daughter, wilt thou fight against God?'

FRAGMENTS

On her face the look, 'I live, because death evades me.'

Varying are the moods of grief. I was lapsing into the arrogance of sorrow which fostered an exclusiveness I vainly strove to justify.

I, whose love for children was genuine, could hand on the legacy of love that one generation of women after another had bequeathed as birthright to the children of the future.

The fact of Separation never quitted my thoughts: dwelling on it was undermining the scaffolding of my spiritual life. I pondered over the word 'Separation' till it began to take for me the place of that other word 'Love.' It darkened my horizon, it shortened my view. Then, awestruck, I discerned the vastness of its import when applied not to human separation, but to separation from God. That indeed involved absolute destruction of body and soul. Thank God I sought strength in prayer. I prayed and prayed with a passionate fervour such as I

had never yet experienced. In answer to my supplications a sense of protection invigorated every vein; while before my eyes there arose no vision of the Holy Grail, but, instead, glimmering through rainbow tints, there came a vision of the Sanctuary of Prayer. Within those sacred precincts can be found guidance and consolation in time of adversity, draughts of hope, and the uplifting certainty of returning peace and gladness.

Lying prone in silence and solitude, I beheld a script bearing in phosphorescent characters the words: 'HOPE ENGULFS DESPAIR.' I had no time for reflexion, for at once unconsciousness seized me. Entire cessation of all struggles, all clamour replaced the turmoil of my harassed soul. All feelings were in abeyance; the power of love suspended; desire for sympathy cancelled; memories expunged; motives for action withdrawn. The duration of this condition, whether long or short, I had no means of measuring; but only one sense seemed to be accorded me—the sense of security, security unending and complete. Nothing stirred. Then a whisper echoed through my soul, and re-echoing, I caught the words, *Desirest thou renewal of thyself? Then loosen the bonds of self-deception.*

I craved for a daily link with Adrian, though he had been called above and I was left on earth. In our spiritual life there was concord, and there I found the link I sought. Rejoicing in God's works and in their beauty unites us spiritually, and daily heavenward a song of mine shall rise to blend with Adrian's. He employed in God's service beyond the grave, I bearing my sorrow on

earth, are both being taught of God. To Adrian comes understanding: to myself consolation.

Surrender, surrender yourself, Elinor, wholly to the working and direction of the Holy Spirit, so that the 'Fruits of the Spirit, which are Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness and Temperance', may fill you, equipping you for the task God sets before you each day. Joy direct from the Spirit will bring your soul out of prison—the prison into whose grim area with headlong flight you plunged. There is a song with the refrain 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing' the notes whereof may choke in your throat; yet, despite this, persevere to the end, till you can send forth in clear thrilling tones a song that will soar to Heaven. Days may possibly elapse when no volume of sound is forthcoming; but even then cultivate a murmur of joy as softly audible as the purling of a tiny mountain stream. Grief unduly cherished shrouds God from our sight. Do not harbour misgivings as to the presence of happiness in your spiritual life as though it implied disloyalty to your love. Happiness is planned for us, and will reach us from God, unless we, in our folly, barricade it out. You cannot shed your grief, it is too deep and far-reaching; but the growth of resentment in your soul, you must God-aided uproot.

'Adrian often spoke with delight of your being an incarnation of joyousness. That his death should result in obscuring the whole course of your life, he would have absolutely forbidden, dwelling on the deplorable lack of

faith it would evince. The love of one's relations, distractions, change of scene—all fail to bring comfort in presence of an overpowering sorrow like yours and mine: and yet, did not Job ask, "Are the consolations of God small with thee?" No indeed, for "In the multitude of the sorrows I had in my heart, Thy comforts have refreshed my soul".'

Never seek to limit God's power, and it is limiting it to lament the impossibility of your emulating His saints.

With Adrian's death, that young natural joyousness of yours is destroyed: gladness will not dance round you as of yore. But joy in Christ, and through Him in others, will still fill your life. Souls grow and expand through easing pain and promoting joy; and bearing one another's burdens gives increase both of fortitude and gentleness.

'I have thought, dear Elinor, even in witnessing your boundless sorrow that to act as God's messenger to those in sore affliction may be your high destiny. God does not deal with us at random. In His far-reaching purpose, often hidden at first from our view, there is a destined use to be made of all those gifts of ours, all the richness of our developing personality. All will be needed for the service of others. Your joyous nature is God-given. God wills it to be preserved and used by you in your contacts with those you meet through life. Don't protest, Elinor. Heed my entreaties. Enter not, I beseech you, as Seneschal, a Castle of Grief.'

'Let the memory of those we love fill us with an aftermath of joy.' These words of Uncle Alan's turned the sod of my mourning, awakening a longing for the peace I saw reigning in his soul—the wonderful peace that 'passeth all understanding', for its calm holiness quenches every fear. Fear undoubtedly played the major part in my repudiation of life. I feared loneliness. I dreaded life without the sympathy of love; and having felt the strength of its support, I shrank from facing life alone and destitute.

The essence of human consolation is sympathy, but to bestow complete sympathy is in this world beyond our power. Heartfelt sympathy may carry us to the soul's sacred portal, but the actual entrance is closed. Within the inner sanctuary, the soul acquainted with grief holds communion with God alone—Who only is comfort and sufficiency of joy. For now I learnt that the comfort of God does indeed bring joy: it does not only help us to endure. And this comfort which we have of God we must carry with us in our sympathy with others. In truth I had in the past sympathised with Uncle Alan's happiness, and he had ever welcomed the sympathy I gave. This recollection encouraged me to hope that our past comradeship in the happiness we each had enjoyed, might bring a new note into our fresh comradeship in grief. It came upon me as a revelation that joys grow like flowers by every one of life's paths, and they are there to be culled by even the most footsore of wayfarers. The following morning, when my prayers were ended, uppermost in my mind

was a feeling that something had passed from me. My sorrow in its intensity enwrapped me still, but from the terrible burden of grief crushing me to earth, I was released. A thankfulness beyond utterance enveloped me, and springing from it uprose a sense of spiritual buoyancy. Was buoyancy then not outside the range of possibility for me? Yes: of human possibility, but with the Lord all things are possible. 'That gladness shall be our hope,' is a herald of promise contained in the Book of Proverbs, and the coming of pleasure after pain is invariably a cause of surprise. It is a sign equally that the fetters of undisciplined grief are loosening their hold.

Great differences of meaning can the same words convey, coloured as they are by the passing phases of our minds.

My uncle does not disguise from me the greatness of his grief, nor does he ask me to hide mine; but he does reject making sorrow for years to come one's boon companion. The perfection of his and Marion's married life, and the glorious promise opening before Adrian and myself, are too beautiful to be gloom-bedewed by unlimited grief. From among God's choicest gifts to man, we both received the supreme gift of all, a love without a flaw. The knitting of our souls together has been suspended, but God has not revoked His gift, reunion shines over us like a star in the Heaven.

In our moments of depression, we should hail any break in the clouds through which a ray of the sun may penetrate to melt our gloom.

Reaching our half-closed ears penetrates a whisper: *Courage is yours for the asking.* The words, winged with hope, bring solace to the soul, though their course remains unknown. Enlightenment follows, revealing both the ascension of prayer and its ladder of descent.

God, who is very pitiful and of tender mercy, permits those on high, who gave us love when here, to waft earthward thoughts of fellowship and love.

It is not my desire to hold aloof from joy, because the wondrous gift accorded me did not attain its fulfilment here. Let us never, through craving for one joy of outstanding magnitude, rebuff those lesser joys which are apportioned us.

Absorption in either happiness or sorrow warps nature, raising barriers that foster isolation.

Prayer's high privilege is to encompass us with consolation, and open wide the avenue to hope. We voice in prayer the blessings desired for those we love, the help we crave for daily needs, the praise from earth we fain would swell. How often in hours of exaltation does the faltering member of the communion of saints-to-be feel the gift of prayer eluding her grasp; and then in one swift flight it soars to Heaven, caught up with the adoration offered by the communion of saints above. Then descends on those below the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

Inculcate resourcefulness in children, a talisman solving many difficulties.

A year ago today came the news that Adrian had fallen in battle, killed outright; thereupon a tempest of grief shook my soul. For days I lived in a riot of emotions one and all selfish. I look on the time that followed with shame and amazement at the density of my unrestrained grief. Aunt Marion's death and the succour my uncle besought of me were the means God employed for the rescue of my soul. The Lord giveth sight to the blind. My blindness vociferated for sight. Might the promised light that bestows light disperse my darkness. I ceased not to beseech that the light Christ sheds might illumine and encompass me. These blessed truths which I had accepted with blank listlessness and a stupor of indifference were now working to awaken hope in my soul.

When talking of my sorrow at Adrian's death with his brother, he surprised me by saying, 'Faithful love to Adrian's memory should not condemn you to a living death.'

'A living death?' I queried.

'Yes. The exclusion of joy deals a fatal blow to many of life's activities. You live yet death encircles you.'

Humility should be ingrained in our souls. We must pray for it to be woven into the very texture of our being.

Sinners, and prone to sin, in this world we shall ever remain, but to focus our sight exclusively on sin is a misapprehension of God's pardon and of our life in Christ.

Beauty enshrined in our memory gladdens the soul,
aiding it to expel the remembrance of pain.

The transcendent glory of the world is the miracle of
God's love, linked with the love He bids us yield.

A great mission is entrusted to those richly dowered,
the bestowal of gifts and benefits. Wisely should the recipients of wealth wield their high privilege. Humility and thankfulness to God, love and sympathy for their neighbours will guard them from pride.

That the conviction of sin in its heinousness should be realised is imperative, or the soul, groping in darkness, will remain an outcast from God. The working of the Holy Spirit instigating self-examination can alone rouse us to the need of ample confession, no errors withheld. In penitent abasement, let us beseech the guidance of the Holy Spirit to our Lord's feet, there to receive Christ's absolution, its cleansing power washing away our sins and renewing our spiritual life.

Prayer needs the glory of Praise for its ascension.

When we pray through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that same Spirit becomes our escort to God, removing obstacles and dispelling every shroud that veils our sight.

Poets innumerable have acclaimed the rapture of love, of beauty, of happiness. In spiritual life, rapture fills our

silence in God, where the peace of God that passeth all understanding enfolds us—God's pardon covering our dumbness.

A glorious sunrise reveals earth's beauty, earth's enticements; the sun in setting splendour unveils *a view of many mansions*.

Though joys are fleeting, their legacies remain.

Ridicule is mirth at the expense of our fellows, and finds no entrance to Heaven where the weeds of ill nature perish for lack of the soil they need, but in Heaven the gaiety of laughter will echo and re-echo.

'Rejoicing in hope,' knowing that 'All things work together for good to those who love God' was the lesson I found hardest to learn. 'Leaping over the wall' I had erected between God and myself appeared impossible. The lack of Adrian's presence parched my soul with famine and thirst, not in this world to be quenched. Hence my craving for death irrespective of all else. I am weary, I repeated, for the waters of sorrow have flooded my soul, and my heart within me is desolate. Aimless was the repetition, 'My heart within me is desolate' till one radiant June morning, after my prayers, uprose the question: Need my heart remain desolate? Its desolation surely proceeds from my persistent resistance to God's will. The beautiful verse in Proverbs, 'Son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways', revealed the path I

should tread. Perceiving with deep penitence my opposition to God's ways, I felt I must approach our Lord beseeching that my inmost heart may be changed, and that from this time onwards I should be enabled to bow to God's will.

A man overwhelmed with remorse had begged Uncle Alan to receive him, and gave me later this account of their interview.

'I entered Mr. Graham's room, craving to unburden my soul, and his manner and the deep attention he paid to my recital enabled me to make a full confession unadorned with excuse. Mr. Graham made no attempt to palliate the deed which I acknowledged was sinful beyond extenuation. He announced gravely: "You are right. True penitence rejects extenuation. On our knees let us implore the pardon Christ holds out. My prayers shall be for you, and for myself I crave yours".'

Acquiescence penetrates deeper than submission, implying the soul's participation in God's decision.

God's love is the divine talisman, enfolding and uplifting our souls.

The embodiment of adoration given in the Psalms, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee', dwelt enshrined in my father's soul.

I had often wondered at Elinor's power of attracting children of every age, and at the unlimited confidence

she inspired. She accounted for it by her frank recognition of their separate individualities. They resent our assumption, she said, that they all think and act alike. My recognition is genuine. I can distinguish the innate personality of one infant from another. I moreover cordially sympathise with the bewildered darlings' assertion of individuality, whereby alone they are enabled to gather clues for the understanding of this most puzzling world. Never must we forget, added Elinor, that the civilisation which children assimilate differs in many essentials from ours. Scarcely appreciated is children's own code of conduct, and at times they are punished for an infraction of a code quite other than their own.

I realised for the first time the magic flower of Elinor's insight. She to whom wifehood and motherhood had been denied, heard as the heart heareth, the treasured secrets whispered to her by young and timid children as they nestled to her.

Uniformly gracious should be our acceptance of gifts great or small. Ungraciousness deprives our friends of the joy of giving, and rebuffs their generosity.

To retain Youth, remain keenly alive to passing events; advocate reform; hail progress and extend help to those around us.

The prayer of a child who has fallen down and bruised its forehead: O please God our Father take away this

dreadful pain, but do not let the bump go down till the others have seen it. Please not. Amen.

Eschew assumptions, they lead to error.

The Communion of Saints!—Does not the mere utterance of these words waft us peace? Every sorrow and trial, every temptation and despair known to man was once their individual experience. Over them, as over us, swayed earthly love with its pleasures and duties. God gave to them, as to us, the knowledge of love divine, and required for Himself the entire love of their being, in the same measure as He still demands it from His servants of earth. Think of the procession down the ages of the army of faith, their deeds of heroism, their combats with sin, their transcendent love of God. Then, dying in faith, they left us heirs of their lives and triumphs. Innumerable records of them lie scattered over the Christian world. Through them individual lives become known to us, and we may specifically adopt some saints for love and imitation. Hereafter, meeting on high, we shall recite how Christ, the author of their faith and ours, allowed their example to inspire our life and actions. From the long list of their glorious achievements, encouragement breathes on every life today.

Prayer's high privilege is to encompass us with consolation, and open wide the avenue to hope. We voice in prayer the blessings desired for those we love, the help we crave for daily needs, the praise from earth we fain

would swell. Prayer, even as a mother, extends her welcome to every whisper, to every cry, to every wistful sigh. The Communion of Saints-to-be in her hours of exaltation feels prayer eluding her grasp, soaring in one swift flight to Heaven, mingling there with the Communion of Saints-perfected, in adoration of God. Then descends on those below 'the peace of God that passeth all understanding'. God's peace, ardently as we desire it, can never wholly saturate our souls till our limitations are dissolved in that rare atmosphere wherein we shall live and move and have our being with the eyes of our understanding enlightened to their utmost. Flung afar beyond possibility of return will be vacillation, hesitation and depreciation of others. From the embarrassing flood of entanglements and excuses so annihilating to our power for action, the peace of God will set us free.

Enumerate the virtues you desire, and you will stagger at the number you lack.

Mirrored in the summer seas, we discern the clear blue of the Heaven mingled with turquoise tints from depths below.

In devotional beauty, nothing can surpass the Lord's Prayer and Job's inspired petition.

The encircled sky starred in glory.

To return to our topic, the Communion of Saints, I fain would honour many of the living, though outside

my ken. I refer to those, lowly in their own eyes, who steadfastly resist temptation, and pursue their path in life, seeking no earthly recognition. In praising God for the temptations they overcome, and in praying that we may follow in their wake, we are paying homage to those unknown followers of Christ. Let us remember them, morning by morning, in our prayers.

In excess of grief, our hearts stand aloof, repelling (such is their wont) all proffers of sympathy.

The existence of joy in the world is clearly perceptible, but with eyes veiled in gloom, joy can be passed unseen. Such passing means personal deprivation, but joy itself remains undimmed.

How marvellous is the illuminating power of joy emanating direct from God. I ask myself, through acquaintance with grief, shall I elect to sit apart in chill darkness when my need of light and warmth is greater than in the days of past happiness?

Vivid must be my realisation that God's joy can enter the saddest heart.

Praise is a ritual never to be omitted. How awful would be exclusion from the chorus of praise that daily ascends to Heaven! To abstain from joy will wreck our lives and atrophy our powers of sympathy. We must pray earnestly for the childlike spirit, ever quick in perception and response.

In Heaven we shall enjoy powers of recognition and memory wholly unsuspected by human penetration.

To rejoice in God's handiwork is alike our duty and our privilege, God's work being a revelation disclosing His power, His glory and His infinite variety.

Faith is the indispensable element of all spiritual life. Without faith spiritual existence would perish.

'Listen, Kenneth,' said Naomi, 'all unaided I have made a proverb. *Avoid whimsicality. It hinders progress.*'

Both Kenneth and I thought this read well, and was an appropriate commencement.

How full are the Psalms of rejoicing and of being glad, of praise-offering and thanksgiving. To exclude rejoicing would leave an irretrievable blank, an overwhelming dreariness in daily life. And this great deprivation, self-inflicted, I had been ready to accept! To counteract my dumbness I resolved every evening to enumerate the day's joys—twice planted in my memory they would thereafter live unforgotten.

The daisy among plants is a symbol of irrepressible vitality; the flowers, continually sacrificed, are ever renewed.

Many are the barriers between children and their elders. Merriment shared removes one, and is perchance

a step—a first step—towards winning the carefully guarded approach to a child's confidence.

In the service of Christ alone can the spirit of understanding lead us to the perception of God's will, and the immeasurable love that accompanies it.

Happiness is planned for us, and will reach us from God, unless we in our folly barricade it out.

There must be no failure of chivalry in the service of Christ. To do justice to others, we must approach our neighbours' difficulties with insight and chivalrous excuse, all upbraiding suppressed.

'Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.' This promise of friendship transcends in divine graciousness the powers of human conception. It kindles in us the love and peace wherewith we shall approach the pillars of Heaven within which our crowning joy will be the friendship of our blessed Lord, the Saviour of the world. Is not this joy unsurpassed? Our Lord's words, 'that your joy may be full', confirm the sufficiency of His gift, and its final removal of fear.

Beyond all price is the power of bestowing happiness, a gift entrusted by our Lord to those who promote the welfare of their neighbours. Many who have suffered the throes of sorrow yearn to spread happiness around.

To God's immeasurable greatness the only comparison is His love: to His supreme majesty, His condescension.

Wending our way along the path of life, we yearn to cast off the cumbersome burden of sin. Then the Holy Ghost reminds us of the words proclaiming our liberation: 'Having forgiven you all trespasses', 'be ye thankful', and 'Let the peace of God rule in your hearts'.

A treasure beyond compare is God's gift of joy. Joy can be shared, deepened, prolonged, extended, aye extended to the past. Churlish and unthankful are all attempts to quench or diminish joy. The transcending wonder of the Universe is God's love. Obedience to His supreme command, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself,' involves a miracle—the power of fulfilment which ever accompanies God's commands.

Acquiescence in God's will, with its flashlights of joy, surpasses resignation, disclosing our advance in the understanding of the lessons set for our learning, and foreshadowing 'the peace wherein lies our content'.

Human condescension, with its savour of superiority, is resented: God's condescension, in its overwhelming love, showers down comfort and hope.

To hope, to rejoice, to be glad, are commands running parallel with the command to repent. Immersion in spiritual rejoicing will therefore bring into our lives a foretaste of 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God'. The

splendour of our heritage—ours through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross—may at first blind us, even as the light at Damascus blinded St. Paul; but the joy given to us by God will aid us to uplift our sight.

Among our neighbours, some will seek aid in their spiritual life. Good intentions need for their fruition the sunshine of encouragement.

To voice fully praise and thanksgiving transcends the compass of human song. The Holy Spirit alone can attune our praise into melodies reaching high Heaven; and the same Spirit will teach us to weave into our daily life golden threads of praise.

Supreme among miracles is the high miracle of God's love, which is very pitiful and of tender mercy. Clinging to its guidance, we pass from outer darkness into God's marvellous light.

Suppress dislikes. They impoverish the soul.

One of the prerogatives of delight in beauty is to call forth praise.

To all spiritual life, praise is essential. 'Let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord'; and through praise we learn the hymns the saints have sung. As the power to praise increases, praise swells the chorus of song soaring from earth to Heaven. To serve the Lord with gladness, to rejoice in His works, train the soul to keep His testimonies and to love them exceedingly.

Though of a different complexion, joy unalloyed springs from the knowledge that Christ's flock on earth, the Communion of Saints-to-be, increases ever in numbers and in saintliness. This fellowship in our midst is a foretaste of the fellowship of Heaven.

To rejoice in the Lord is a command. On those in obeisance before Him, God sheds the light of His presence, streaming upon them as they bend before Him, and filling their hearts with joy and gladness.

In the soul lies a caress for every joy that enters. From joy's fragrance rises praise, the incense of the soul.

Verily a grace is spiritual absorption, enfolding our souls, preserving them unspotted from the world.

In Elinor's face is a combination rarely seen. Despite the ingrained sadness left by deep sorrow, her countenance still radiates gleams of hope undimmed.

Beautiful is the grace of serenity, redolent with the spirit of acceptance which banishes all doubts and all fears.

Have you watched on a summer's evening, how a wreath of rose gossamer sometimes thrusts itself between the azure of sea and sky?

Earth's years in their passing first age, and then destroy the body. Beyond their touch, unharmed lies the

soul, which passing through the Gates of Death, anchors in the haven where it would be.

When enumerating, at the end of our pilgrimage here, the joys that have illumined our path, their number, not their paucity, will surprise us.

God alone is pure joy, continuous, all-pervading and complete. Countless blessings ensue from the acceptance of sorrow at God's hands. The broken-hearted raise their eyes to see descending a vision of celestial joy. Transfixed in ecstasy they cease from weeping, for the certain eternity of joy has conferred a solace surpassing that of hope itself. Happiness allotted by God is ever to be accepted with praise and gladness, but when enjoyment thereof occurs before the soul has known sorrow, spiritual joy in its depth and in its limitless powers of revelation, is never fully unveiled. The human intellect at its loftiest is incapable of penetrating the extent and reality of joy enthroned in God—in God alone. I was accorded the full fruition of earthly love, while you, Elinor, only tasted love, though a vision of its satisfying completeness was vouchsafed you. These our possessions are unassailable by others: the heritage of love our own sullenness and forgetfulness alone can diminish, nay even can obliterate. For the conquest of unmeasured grief we must pray and struggle unceasingly. And then we should undertake the task of 'peeling off' grief's cumbersome garments, those which impede our free pursuit of the path which God has prepared for us to tread.

ELINOR DYING

I am dying, and need no longer clamour for death: its advent draws nigh. I praise God with deep thankfulness for His extension of life to me—the life I once rebelliously demanded should cease. I have learnt much. Among my dying hopes is the hope that I may leave as legacy the memory of some experience of my spiritual life which can be handed on. Grains of sand from Love's shore, fragrance caught from joy, an echo of praise from song—may these flow back to those I leave, as heritage to be preserved, however slight. I said I had learnt much. Foremost I place the knowledge that separation by death from those we love does not break the union which links us together in our spiritual life. Adrian in the service of Christ above, myself in Christ's service below—we still are joined by links as unbreakable as they are enduring. My soul rejoiced in the realisation of our union through service in Christ. I had erred deeply. Prayer and meditation brought the revelation of Joy's ever-living presence, which my own spiritual blindness had missed but could not extinguish. Arduous was the lesson set before me. Many pre-conceived notions had to be discarded and many false conclusions flung aside, ere my appren-

ticeship to sympathy brought about Joy's resurrection in my heart. Joy, gladness and pleasure are wafted to us from on high, charged with divine power to impress on us that 'through God we shall do great acts', for 'in His presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand dwells pleasure for evermore'. From my childhood upward, I have revelled in joy, craving to bask in its glow; and now, nearing Heaven's portals whence light shineth forth as a sun, I am persuaded of Joy's rapture awaiting us in that land where God's ordinance is *Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create*. My pilgrim's garb will be cast off. This corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal frame will put on immortality, for then will all be arrayed in fine linen white and clean. Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory through Christ the Prince of Life. Praise the Lord my soul, for Death is illumined by Joy.

I pray that in like manner your death may be illumined, precious, much-loved Naomi, whom dying I bless.

Elinor

A LETTER

You, a friend very dear to me, ask me for words about old age, a condition we together share. I willingly write you some of my thoughts. The sorrows, the difficulties, even the gloom frequently incumbent on old age are all conquerable by patience and hope. Hope, God-sent, will lighten our last steps with ever-increasing brilliancy; but to keep its radiance, hope needs tending even as the wise virgins tended their lamps. Hope enfolding us can aid our intercourse with others, and, perchance even unknown to ourselves, bring them a whisper of itself. Hope contains the element of growth, and its roots, in the passage of time, can spread in our souls, filling them irresistently with expectation of perfect happiness and freedom in the world to come. Now I turn to patience. James in his epistle calls it 'Long Patience'; and can anything be more appropriate to advancing years than a patience that lengthens and stretches far, far without a break? Is it not a necessity if we are to dwell in love and peace with those around us, realising in deep humility the burdens we lay on others by our words and deeds? Hope and patience can dispel even the shadow of gloom.

Every command of God implies the power of achievement, and in Ephesians we read that we are to make melody in our hearts to the Lord. It is hard to conceive that the angels themselves can know a more uplifting joy, and it is our privilege that this joy we should and can experience. This making melody to the Lord in our hearts sweeps away every vestige of age *as* age, and can fill our hearts with that buoyancy which is the very essence of youth. This desire of ours for melody and joy can become even more passionate as life draws to its close than in the days of our youth, for the end of our pilgrimage here is at hand, the race set before us is nearly run, the City we have sought is in sight.

LITANY OF PRAISE

For magpies in black and white array,
For velvet lawns where sunbeams chase and play,
For apple blossom gay garbed in pink and white,
For chestnut stately blooms, spring visions of delight,
For sunflowers, summer's golden heralds,
For the music of children's laughter echoing from their
play,
For the wee wren softly singing,
My tiny form and modest garb despise not.
Gentle ways win many friends,
For summer's sunsets in radiant skies,
For dog's expressive eyes pleading for love's return,
For robins pugnacious to the feathered tribe, while
friendly to our race,
For doves, soft cooing a lullaby to fairy babes,
For rosebuds red ensheathed in emerald moss,
For buttercups gold-lacquered gleaming in sunny meadows,
For owls, soft balls of fluff we fain would stroke,
For deep-hued violets appealing in their charm,
For birds stirring our hearts with their liquid notes of joy,
For the feathered rush of birds in spring,

For rustling leaves in autumn recalling the murmur of
waiting crowds,
For the flush of rose rising on a summer evening from sea
to sky,
For May blossom powdered pink,
For the orange blossom's bridal wreath,
For the Banksia rose of fairy elves,
For sweet peas redolent of perfume,
For the cuckoo's note, first harbinger of spring,
For soft-eyed primrose in tender yellow,
For daisies irrepressible in desire to live,
For laburnum with its sunkissed tresses,
For white lilacs tasselled in lace,
For roses, queens of scent and colour,
For the cowslip balls we toss,
For the fragrance of golden gorse,
For the swallows acclaimed with joy,
For snowdrops smiling at winter's passing,
For radiant tulips of regal mien,
For water lilies rooted in tranquil stream,
For lilies of the valley, their white bells pealing,
For the music of children's laughter in their games at
play,
For the pink-hosed chattering seagulls,
For forget-me-nots fringing with blue the summer
meadows,
For harebells, unconscious of charm, swayed by the sum-
mer breeze,
For wheat fields in August sun, the late gold of the
fading summer,

For Madonna lilies regal in beauty and sovereign purity,
For the mystic passion flower recalling Gothic art,
For the clematis wreathing garlands for the waning year,
For the sky starred with glory,
For the sun's gleaming mirror, the sparkling sea,
For the dewdrops changing with every morning, seeming
sometimes like jewels dropped by a vanished rain-
bow,
For daisies sprinkled on the lawn,
For softly scented honeysuckles,
For peonies in royal red,
All these I praise in song.
The great chorus of praise Earth ever yields to Heaven.

Yours affectionately
Hazel Hovine

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 037 905 7

